

Images of the Ottomans in History Textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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This article analyzes the history textbooks that are used in primary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim of establishing the main contours of the image of the Ottomans which is depicted in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian textbooks. To achieve this, this article compares how the key issues in Ottoman history, such as the Kosovo battle and the process of Islamization, are handled. It becomes clear that there is a difference between Bosnia and Herzegovina history textbooks, which try to highlight the best from the past as the basis for contemporary coexistence, and Serbian textbooks, and sometimes Croatian ones, which bring forward the worst of it for the students, attention. What is especially disturbing is the frequent mention in Serbian textbooks of alleged impalements of Serbs by the Ottomans. The myths that other authors have identified in general national historiographies of the Balkans are almost all present in the textbooks analyzed. By comparing contemporary history textbooks with the Franciscan and Orthodox monastery chronicles from 15th and 18th century Bosnia the paper shows how nationalism distorted historiography in Bosnia in ways that require urgent rewriting of the textbooks so that others may be included in a meaningful way.

Keywords: Bosnia, Ottoman image, history textbooks, education, Balkans.

The association of Balkan Muslims and Islam with the Ottoman Turks is so strong that not only have the non-Muslims in the Balkans used the term 'Turk' for Muslims, but the Muslims themselves, with a dose of pride - at least until recently, also use this term. Throughout the ages, friends and enemies have perceived the Ottomans first and foremost as Muslims. This would not have been of much importance today had not the Islamization

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process resulted in permanent demographic changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter B&H or BH) and the emergence of a new religious group of Muslims. Since the period in which one of the BH religious groups was born is considered to be the worst period of national history by the two other BH groups, how the Ottomans are represented in history textbooks is of relevance for the image of the religious other in Bosnia today.

There is a number of ways one could deal with this topic. Here we will first compare the perspectives from which Ottoman history is presented in BH elementary school textbooks: Is it the perspective of one of the three BH nations, or of all three? And what history is covered: military, political, social, cultural or economic? Choices made in this regard strongly influence the images of the Ottomans that are produced. Political and military histories generally tend to be more divisive than cultural ones, for instance. Then we will compare the ways in which the key issues in Ottoman history are handled, such as: the Kosovo battle, the Islamization process, the relative position of Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, demographic changes in the aftermath of the Ottoman conquest, moral qualities of the Ottomans as compared with others, etc. By looking at these issues we hope to establish the main contours of the image of the Ottomans that is depicted in various textbooks. Finally, we will look at the illustrations used, and how they contribute to the image of the Ottomans.

1. Research Scope

I will analyze history textbooks used in the primary schools of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is plenty of material on the Ottomans in Bosnian and Serbian language textbooks, while the Croatian ones spend considerably less time on the Ottomans. The Serbian language textbooks are in use mainly in the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska, ca 49% of B&H). These textbooks are produced by the Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Tools, Eastern Sarajevo (*Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Istočno Sarajevo*). I have analyzed the following textbooks:

Rade Mihaljčić, *Istorija 7*, 2005, hereafter S7;

Rade Mihaljčić, *Istorijska čitanka za šesti razred osnovne škole*, 2001 (history reader book used as supplement to seventh-grade textbook), hereafter S7a;

Milutin Perović, Borislav Stanojlović and Milo Strugar, *Istorija 8*, 2005, hereafter S8;

Ranko Pejić, *Istorija 9*, 2005, hereafter S9.

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croats use textbooks published by *Školska naklada* (School Publisher) in Mostar. I have reviewed the following two textbooks:

Ivo Makek and Andrija Nikić, *Povijest 6*, 2001, hereafter C6;

Ivan Dukić, Krešimir Erdelja, Andrija Nikić, and Igor Stojaković, *Povijest 7*, 2001, hereafter C7.

Schools following the Bosnian-language curriculum use a number of textbooks published by independent publishers. Here I reviewed the following:

Enes Pelidija and Fahrudin Isaković, *Historija 6*, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 2001, hereafter B6;

Fahrudin Isaković and Enes Pelidija, *Historija 7*, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 2001; hereafter B7a;

Edin Radušić, Aladin Husić, and Vehid Smriko, *Historija 7*, Sarajevo: Sarajevo Publishing, 2003, B7b;

Hadžija Hadžiabdić and Edis Dervišagić, *Historija 7*, Sarajevo: Sarajevo Publishing, 2005, hereafter B7c.

The findings and conclusions of this paper are also valid for some high school textbooks by the same authors. This is especially true of Bosnian textbooks.¹ Since there are many similarities in the way textbooks from these three groups treat the Ottomans, we will often refer to Serbian, Croat and Bosnian treatments of the subject, naming the textbook groups by the language they use. Where necessary I will point out differences between the textbooks of the same group, most often the Bosnian textbooks. Individual textbooks will from now on be referred to by their abbreviations to indicate language (Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian) and grade level (grades 6-9).

2. Whose and what history?

Before we embark on the comparison of the Ottoman image in BH history textbooks, two observations should be made regarding the kind of history

1 Rade Mihaljčić is coauthor of a history textbook for the second year of Secondary Grammar School for natural and mathematical sciences. Borislav Stanojlović is coauthor of the history textbook for the second year of four-year vocational schools too. Pelidija and Isaković coauthored the textbook for the second year of Secondary Grammar School, which is actually very similar to *Historija 6* (B6), only sometimes more extensive. Isaković is coauthor of the same textbook for the third year of Secondary Grammar School. Hadžiabdić and Dervišagić are authors of the textbook for the 3rd year of Secondary Grammar School, which again is just an expanded version of their *Historija 7* (B7c).

taught and its reference frame. History textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been attracting the special attention of the international community and individual researchers for some time now, although to the best of my knowledge, the present analysis is the first on its topic. The Office of the High Representative (OHR), the World Bank, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and UNESCO have all played some role in the process of schoolbook revision in B&H, which started in the Sarajevo Canton in 1998, and was soon broadened to include the whole country. On 18 May 1998 the Federation of B&H and the Serb Republic educational authorities signed the “Agreement Regarding Textbook Review and Removal of Offensive Material”. The commitment to this agreement was reiterated on 23 June of the same year with the deadlines being pushed back a month. This general agreement was followed on 19 July 1999 by “The Agreement on the Removal of Objectionable Material from Textbooks to be used in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1999-2000 School Year”, signed in Mostar. This time Bosnia and Herzegovina was applying for Council of Europe membership and was asked to remove potentially offensive materials from its textbooks. Probably because there were various problems and attempts to evade taking meaningful action in this regard, another document, entitled “Implementation of the Agreement of 19 July 1999 on the Removal of Objectionable Material from Textbooks to be used in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1999-2000 School Year” was signed in August 1999 in Banja Luka. On 10 May 2000, ministers signed another “Agreement”, and issued a “Declaration”, which went beyond the simple removal of objectionable material from textbooks, and started the process of building “shared, core elements” in all curricula “in order to enable today’s school-age generation to grow up with a sense of common identity and citizenship of B&H.” It was also reiterated that “(n)ational subjects textbooks which do not refer to B&H are unsuitable for use in B&H.”²

So, the first phase was to remove objectionable parts from the textbooks, while the second phase would include production of new textbooks. Objectionable materials were to be identified by entity committees, and where they could not agree, Independent Commissions for Textbook Review, established by the OHR in cooperation with the Council of Europe and UNESCO, were to arbitrate. There were two types of texts to deal with: some passages were to be blacked out with non-transparent markers until new editions could be printed, others were to be stamped with the following

2 See the document “Textbook Revision Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina” at http://www.ffzg.hr/seetn/states/bih/textbook_revision_process.htm.

text in one of the BH languages: “The following passage contains material of which the truth has not been established, or that may be offensive or misleading; the material is currently under review.” Initially, there were many attempts to evade the procedure, and in 2002 and 2003, apparently, many schools were still using old textbooks. Some schools were even exhibiting unchanged pages on bulletin boards or telling children how to read the blackened paragraphs.³ These agreements dealt with primary- and secondary-school textbooks in geography, first languages, visual culture, music culture, music, economy and society, and knowledge of the society. I could not get hold of the report on the revision of history school books, but all the fragmentary reports that I came across pointed out that committees had much more work to do on Serbian and Croatian textbooks than on Bosnian ones.⁴

The next step toward better history teaching was taken in May 2004, when education ministers agreed to establish commissions for the development of guidelines on textbook writing for the subjects of history and geography in B&H. In April 2005, the Commission prepared “Guidelines for Writing and Evaluation of History Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (hereafter “Guidelines”), which were accepted by all BH ministries in charge of education at all levels in the country. The aims of the Guidelines, *inter alia*, is to prepare the ground for the development of textbooks where 1) students would receive a basic understanding of the history and geography of all three constituent peoples and national minorities, 2) Bosnia and Herzegovina is used as a main reference point, and 3) the three constituent peoples and national minorities are represented in a non-offensive manner that respects the feelings of all three constituent peoples and national minorities. To achieve this, the Commission - among

3 Pilvi Torsti, *Divergent Stories, Convergent Attitudes* (Helsinki: Taifuuni, 2003), 158. This revised doctoral dissertation is the most extensive treatment of BH history textbooks, dealing with teaching of 20th century history, including the topics of war, peace and nation. See also Heike Karge, “History after the war: Examples of how controversial issues are dealt with in history textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, paper presented at seminar “Teaching Controversial and Sensitive Issues in History at Secondary Level” organized by Council of Europe, Sarajevo, 19-20 November 1999. URL: http://www.ffzg.hr/seetn/states/B&H/history_after_the_war.htm; and Ann Low-Beer, “Politics, school textbooks and cultural identity: the struggle in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, *Paradigm 2*, no. 3 or *International Textbook Research* no 2 (2001). Denisa Kostovicova has done an excellent analysis of the Ottoman image in the post-1990 Albanian history textbooks. See her “The portrayal of the yoke: The Ottomans and their rule in the post-1990 Albanian-language history textbooks”, *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 24 (2002), 257-78.

4 See for instance Torsti, 169-70. According to Torsti, no objectionable material was found in the Bosnian *History 8* during revision of 1999/2000. I failed to get any information on possible objections to parts of B6 and B7a.

other things-Csuggested that textbooks should “decrease the quantity of information relating to political history”, aiming rather at “building mutual understanding, reconciliation and peace in B&H,” and applying “the principle of multi-perspectivity, in order to enable the pupils to learn tolerance”. Furthermore,

...national history should be presented in the regional context of B&H and neighboring countries, with examples being taken from Bosnia and Herzegovina that reflect diversities as a factor of enrichment. In general, the language used in the textbooks should be free of expressions and definitions that induce hatred or create an image of enemies, especially when speaking about neighboring countries. ... From general and national history, there should be equal coverage of personalities who marked a specific time...⁵

Textbooks written in accordance with these recommendations should have been in use from September 2006, but they are not. Currently, the OSCE mission in B&H is trying to train potential authors of history textbook. In this they are very much relying on the services of the Georg-Eckert Institute for International Textbook research in Germany. How do the textbooks presently in use measure up to the standards of the “Guidelines”?

The Serbian textbooks have the most difficulty passing these tests, for they do not take Bosnia and Herzegovina as their frame of reference, but rather the Serbian nation and Serbian state. The result is that other peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina can hardly identify with what supposedly should be their own history. Specifically, in these textbooks Croats are mentioned only on the margin, while Bosniaks are treated mostly as collaborators or oppressors of Christians, worse than the Sultan himself: Even when the Sultan wanted to grant equal rights to his subjects in the 19th century, Bosniaks (or “Islamized Serbs” as the textbooks S7a and S7 call them) resisted their implementation. Events and personalities from Serbian history outside Bosnia get the lion’s share of space in these textbooks. So, for instance, in S7 medieval Serbian king Stefan Lazarević gets two pages and the Kosovo Battle three; Serb migrations get 14 pages altogether (summed over S7, S7a and S8); uprisings in Serbia get 25 pages in S8; and Serbs in Austria and Venice several pages in S8 - i.e., several times the space dedicated to all the medieval Bosnian kings, who are hardly mentioned. The fall of Bosnia to the Ottomans gets half a page in S7; Bosniak migrations from Serbia receives only six words in S9; Croatian migrations from Bosnia or Serbian settlements in Bosnia is only briefly mentioned; the Bosniaks in

5 “Guidelines”, 2-3.

Bosnia and their revolts in the 1820s and early 1830s receives half a page in S8. The section on the Balkan peninsula in the late 18th and early 19th century in S8 consists of 26 pages about developments in Serbia, seven pages on Montenegro, five on Bosnia and Herzegovina, four on Slavs in Austro-Hungary, five and a half on Serbs in Austro-Hungary, six on the 1848-9 revolution, and another five pages on Vojvodina in 1848-9. The chapter on the second half of the 19th century gives five and a half pages to developments in Serbia, another five and a half pages to Montenegro, and eight pages to Bosnia and Herzegovina, almost exclusively dedicated to the status of Serbs and their uprising. One book spends fifteen pages on the decline and fall of the medieval Serbian kingdom,⁶ compared to only four pages dealing with decline and fall of the medieval Bosnian kingdom.⁷ The history of B&H is lost in the history of neighboring countries. Not only is the history covered predominantly Serbo-Montenegrin, it is also almost exclusively military and political. This is exactly what the aforementioned "Guidelines" want changed.

Altogether, Croatian textbooks devote less space to the Ottomans than either Serbian or Bosnian-language textbooks (nineteen of 158 pages in C6, only three in C7). There is a greater balance between the BH and Croatian perspectives, although the Croatian one is given priority even where it is illogical, as in the subtitle "Turkish Threat Approaches Croatia and Bosnia",⁸ as if the Ottomans attacked Croatia first. In fact, one book deals twice with the Ottoman conquest of B&H.⁹ Most probably, this was an attempt to make the originally Croatian textbook more suitable to the BH context by tacking on a chapter with more BH history at the end, where it (chrono)logically does not belong. However, very little is said about Bosniaks and Serbs, or rather Muslim and Orthodox inhabitants of Bosnia.¹⁰ (Muslims are referred to as "people of Muslim religion".¹¹ In these textbooks there is also a little more balance between military and political history on the one side and other aspects of history on the other, although there is an emphasis on military developments, particularly in the depiction of the Ottomans.

6 S7: 161-75.

7 S7: 176-79.

8 C6: 88.

9 C6: 89-90, 93-94 and 154-158.

10 In the Foreword to the history textbook for the second year of the high school the authors explicitly state that in this textbook "the focus of attention is on people and events in the thousand-year-long history of the Croats" (Franko Mirošević et al., *Povijest 2*, Mostar: Školska naklada, 2001, p. 4).

11 C7: 64.

While there are no precise measurements that can be applied, Bosnian textbooks seem closer to satisfying the “Guidelines”, especially textbooks that were written anew in 2003 and 2005.¹² Both of these have a great deal to say about economic, social, and cultural aspects of Ottoman history in addition to the political and military. They also do a far better job on the principle of multi-perspectivity as well. According to the publisher of B7b, this book has in fact passed reviews for potentially offensive contents by both entity committees for textbook revision.¹³ Books B6 and B7a were originally written in 1994, but still their focus is Bosnia with all three peoples. Much less is said about Serbia under the Ottomans in B6. The Kosovo battle, for instance, is dealt with in a few lines only.¹⁴ B7a allows more space for developments in Serbia and other Balkan and “South Slavic countries”. Together with B6, it is also the only one of the textbooks that is printed partly in Latin and partly in Cyrillic script. The other books are either in Latin or Cyrillic. Although written and used mainly by Bosniaks, these schoolbooks at least try - not always successfully, as we will see - to provide a BH perspective on the history under our scrutiny.

These general observations regarding the kind of history dealt with in the textbooks under review provide a background for the following discussion of the key topics of Ottoman history in these BH history textbooks, through which I hope to reconstruct the images of the Ottomans in the textbooks.

3. Key Issues of Ottoman History in BH History Textbooks

The Kosovo Battle of 1389

Predictably, the Kosovo Battle of 1389 occupies a different place in different BH textbooks. B6 spares only five lines to observe that Ottoman expansion was made easier after the victory of its army at Kosovo on 28 June 1389 over the forces of Serb and, partly, other Balkan feudal lords. After the battle, many of the defeated feudal lords became Ottoman vassals, as did the newly established Serbian *Despotovina*.¹⁵ B7b and B7c do not deal with 14th-century history, and therefore do not mention the Kosovo Battle. C6 only says that “in 1389 they (the Ottomans) defeated the army of the Serb prince Lazar on Kosovo field”.¹⁶

12 B7b and B7c.

13 Symbolically, perhaps, both textbooks have only *Historija* on the cover page, but inside the title is given as *Historija | Istorija | Povijest*.

14 B6: 86.

15 B6: 86.

16 C6: 73.

As one would expect, S7 devotes much more space - three full pages - to the Kosovo battle¹⁷ and refers pupils to the supplementary reader for a further four pages on the battle and the legend of Kosovo.¹⁸ About two-thirds of both texts are devoted to the Kosovo legend. Serbia is presented as the *ante murale christianitatis* that successfully repelled the Turks on several occasions. However, prior to the Kosovo battle, Turkey is depicted as a world power spreading over two continents. Sultan Murat brought troops from various continents, experienced commanders, and also his sons to the battle, indicating that Kosovo was not a minor clash for him. He was also supported by his vassals, some of them Christian. Serbia at the time was too small, and not all the relatives or friends of the Serbian ruler sent their troops to the battle, whose “details and outcome are not known”.¹⁹ The Serbian and Turkish rulers lost their lives. Sultan Murat was killed by the Serb warrior Miloš Obilić/Kobilić. Murat’s younger son Yaqub lost his life, too, at the order of the new sultan, his older brother Bayazit. This battle, says the textbook, had a strong impact around the world: everybody now knew the power of the Ottomans. Hence, the exploit of the Kosovo heroes set off a storm of enthusiasm even in the most distant parts of Christendom. Because of the sultan’s death, many initially believed that the Turks had been defeated. However, the great losses on both sides proved a blow only to the Serb lands, which were now left without warriors and therefore eventually forced to acknowledge the sultan’s suzerainty. Few reliable witness accounts remained, and the battle quickly became a legend. However, it is not an ordinary story, claims the textbook. It is based on a real clash, and the legend itself served as the foundation of “a popular historical consciousness. Its core is a real, historical event”.²⁰

In line with the overall inclination which is extremely didactical, the text concludes that the betrayal of some Serb warriors and the heroism of others, served respectively as a warning to the vacillating and low-spirited among later Serb rebels, and emboldened the courageous among them. The Ottoman conqueror was mighty indeed, a formidable foe, but Serb heroes were not frightened. Several verses from a popular epic about the Ottoman numbers at Kosovo are quoted.²¹ The accompanying reader brings an excerpt from the letter of the “Florence municipality” to king Tvrtko of Bosnia, who had

17 S7: 163-5.

18 S7a: 86-90.

19 S7: 163.

20 S7: 164.

21 S7: 163-5.

sent troops to the battle, congratulating him on the victory over the “savage enemy” who intended to “exterminate the Christian name from the face of the Earth”.²² This is followed by a popular vision of the battle, with the two rulers as “enemies by law, faith and empires”. Sultan Murat is a tyrant and barbarian, but a proud and mighty enemy. His fellow Turks are cunning people and the whole battle is unjust and tragic. Miloš’s assassination of the sultan is told in detail.²³ Unlike the textbook, the reader notes several times that the battle took place on St. Vid’s day (*Vidovdan*). The text is followed by illustration of Miloš Obilić dressed for battle.²⁴ Probably, the authors felt that relating all the legends about Kosovo battle would not be appropriate in a textbook. However, they could not pass over the opportunity to teach the pupils the lesson about Kosovo, so they used the supplementary reader to get around the problem.

Islamization in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The most important and controversial process that took place during the Ottoman period in Bosnia was the conversion to Islam of many, at times a majority, of its inhabitants. The presentation of this process has direct contemporary political implications. It is a common practice of Serbian and some Croatian historians to deny the voluntary nature. A Croatian textbook under scrutiny, however, affirms that the Turks did not force Christians to adopt Islam:

Christians lived under the sultan’s protection but in exchange had to pay heavily: *kharaj* in gold - the emperor’s tax on males. That induced many Christians to voluntarily convert to Islam, since that was a way to escape paying heavy *kharaj*. Besides, if they converted to Islam they would belong to a favored class and could enter various lucrative services. The Islamized aristocracy preserved its possessions and serfs. Yes, Turks did forcefully Islamize some through the so-called ‘tax in blood’ - by taking strong healthy boys and young men for their janissary units.²⁵

Another textbook only mentions in passing that “(i)n the Bosnian pashaluk lived a significant number of people of Muslim faith”.²⁶ Under the subheading “general consequences of the Turkish conquest”, a Serbian textbook makes the short observation that “(a) portion of the vanquished

22 S7a: 87.

23 S7a: 88-90.

24 S7a: 89.

25 C6: 156.

26 C7: 64.

population accepted Islam - the *conqueror's religion*".²⁷ S8 notes that "in its constant wars against Christian neighbors the Ottoman government found an ally in local Muslims, who were more numerous here than in any other part of the subjugated Balkans, except for Albania, where the majority of the population (65%) was Islamized".²⁸ Three pages on, the chapter summary has it that "(a) significant part of the Christians converted to Islam in order to make their life easier".²⁹ In one instance, there is an indication that Jašar Pasha of Kosovo forced the Serbs there to convert to Islam.³⁰ In presenting the complex Islamization process in such a one-sided way, Serbian-language history textbooks grossly neglect the rich scholarship on this issue, and simply continue a Serb historiographic practice of presenting Bosnian Muslims as the progeny of greedy landlords, thieves, slaves, poor, mentally ill, lazy, outcasts, prisoners, or at best defeated and confused Serbs who chose to follow the religion of their enemies.³¹

Textbook B6 has a little over a page on the "process of conversion to Islam".³² Here a more complex process is presented, with several factors at work.³³ This process, say the authors, was more pronounced in Bosnia and Herzegovina than in areas where the Catholic and Orthodox Churches had established themselves earlier, pointing to a probably decisive factor in the greater Islamization of Bosnia than of any other Balkan country except Albania. The authors add that this might also be due to the teaching of the Bosnian Church, which was the majority church in the medieval Bosnian state; this is a favorite Bosniak explanation. In addition to ordinary Christians, members of famous feudal families also converted to Islam. Often whole villages and regions converted, especially in the second half of the 16th century. In urban centers, merchants and craftsmen were among the first to convert. However, those who did not convert experienced no trouble because of that decision. The role of *devşirme* in the Islamization process is described as follows:

27 S7: 186, emphasis added.

28 S8: 28.

29 S8: 31.

30 S8: 101. S8 rarely calls Muslims by their proper name. Instead they are referred to as "Islamized Serbs" (S8: 101) or the "fellow nationals of Islamic religion" of the Serbs (S8: 29). They are never mentioned in a positive context.

31 One source puts it this way: "an act of human confusion and collective feeble-mindedness (*maloumlja*).” Quoted from Mustafa Imamović, *Historija Bošnjaka* (Sarajevo: Bošnjačka zajednica kulture Preporod, 1998), 148.

32 B6: 110-11.

33 Pelidija tries to avoid using the term "Islamization" because of the overtones of force inherent. I do not believe that using the cumbersome "conversion to Islam" resolves the historiographic dispute in any meaningful way.

The spread of Islam was influenced by high-ranking officials of the Ottoman state, especially those taken into the janissary service. They received huge possessions and secured timars for members of their families. Although there was no forceful conversion to Islam, which is also a Qur'anic principle, there were those who accepted the new religion in order to make their military or political career. Through janissary recruitment (*devşirme*), the circle of those converting to Islam widened too.³⁴

This makes it sound as if Christians thought of *devşirme* as a privilege, or as if young Christian boys collected through *devşirme* had a choice about converting or staying Christians. A little more honesty would not harm the overall claim about the voluntary nature of the process as a whole. It is reiterated that members of all classes converted to Islam until the 17th century; 75% of the population of the then Bosnian province became Muslims. In the 18th century, the percentage of Muslims declined, mainly due to the loss of Muslim lives in the constant wars and plagues that ravaged the mostly Muslim urban centers.³⁵

B7b considers Islamization the most important change that happened under the Ottomans in this region. The process was "gradual and completely voluntary".³⁶ The conversion of young Christian boys through *devşirme* is not mentioned. Islamization was particularly intensive in the first half of the 16th century, after which few non-Muslims remained. It often happened that one family had Muslims and non-Muslims living together. People of all classes and religious backgrounds accepted Islam. Again, the scale of conversion is explained by the absence of a strong unified church organization in Bosnia, mounting pressure from neighboring church centers on the Bosnian Church, and persecution of the same church by the two last Bosnian kings. At the end of the process, the old BH religious triangle - Bosnian, Catholic, and Orthodox Churches - was replaced by a new religious mosaic in which Islam took the place of the Bosnian Church.³⁷ The authors of B7c mostly agree with this presentation. They point out that by accepting Islam, the Muslim population became privileged, but only in political matters, since it now was eligible to participate in the administration of the country. At the same time they were burdened by the defense of the Empire.³⁸ The overall picture of the Islamization painted in Bosnian language schoolbooks is somewhat idealized, and quite unnecessarily so.

34 B6: 111.

35 B6: 111.

36 B7b: 65, emphasis added.

37 B7: 65-66.

38 B7c: 48-49.

The status of other religious communities and religious tolerance

Bosnian textbooks are keen on highlighting the tolerant attitude of the Ottomans towards their Christian and Jewish subjects. One book says that the Ottoman state was tolerant towards adherents of other religions: Orthodox Serbs belonged to the Peć Patriarchy after its renewal in the mid-16th Century, and the activities of the Catholic Church were legalized by Sultan Mehmet Fatih's *Ahdnama* from 1463 (B7c). The text is illustrated by a copy of the *Ahdnama*. In a separate lesson dedicated to religious tolerance, it is conceded that there were certain differences in rights and obligations, mainly to do with the military service, taxes, and the right to actively participate in the administration of the Empire. Muslims had all the rights and did not pay *kharaj*, but paid a very high price in lives on the front lines defending the state. Otherwise "all were *equal* (emphasis added) in exercising their religious rights and freedoms".³⁹ The different religious sites erected during the Ottoman time within a very small area in Sarajevo, the granting of the *Ahdnama*, the renewal of the Peć Patriarchy and the immigration of Jews all testify to this. Guild membership was multi-religious, and the ceremonies of initiation and promotion within the guild were held according to the rites of the religion to which that particular member belonged. "This is a testimony that in an Ottoman religious environment such as the Bosnia of that time there existed a very strong consciousness of mutual respect and recognition".⁴⁰ Interestingly, I could not find any reference to the "*millet* system". The subsequent division between Muslims and Christians in Bosnia was the result of numerous wars that raged in the 18th century. Because of the additional taxes that were introduced, the status of Christians deteriorated rapidly. Consequently, they started inclining toward Christian countries, the effective enemies of the Ottomans, while Muslims were dying on the front lines fighting those same countries. As a result, the division between Christians and Muslims in Bosnia became more pronounced.⁴¹

Others also insist that

...the Ottomans did not persecute non-Muslims from the conquered territory. They enabled them to continue living under the sultan's rule, granting them the right to life, honor, and property. ... In that sense, the Ottoman state was for a long time the only state in Europe where adherents of different religions could live together. However, in certain aspects of life Christians were in a worse situation than Muslims. Sometimes it was state policy and sometimes

39 B7c: 62.

40 B7c: 61-62.

41 B7c: 135.

abuse of power by state officials. One of the most difficult obligations of Christian population was devşirme, which was a way of securing officials and soldiers for the state.”⁴²

Some pages later it is repeated that “the Ottoman state was very tolerant toward its subjects of different religions ...”.⁴³ The result was preservation of Orthodox and Catholic communities as well as the immigration of persecuted Jews from Spain, despite the spread of Islam, which the state did not impose. An image of *Ahdnama* is reproduced in this book too. However, it is mentioned that Catholic priests were harassed on suspicion of being enemy spies.⁴⁴ These authors also mention the promotion of guild members according to their own religious tradition.⁴⁵

A third Bosnian book emphasizes the cooperation of Husein-kapetan Gradašćević with non-Muslims⁴⁶, as well as joint rebellions of Muslims and Christians against Ottoman policies.⁴⁷ The same authors note in B6 that religious tolerance was very much present during the sultan’s rule. They are quick to add (in parentheses) that a certain change in this regard happened during the crisis in the Ottoman Empire. Over time, a “consciousness of mutual respect and recognition” developed. It often happened that members of the same family belonged to different religions. Muslims and Christians visited each others’ sacred places, while some Muslim authors demanded equal treatment for Muslims and Christians. “Despite centuries of Ottoman rule the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina retained their Bosnian language”.⁴⁸ The differences were overcome through the development of good neighborly relations. Eventually Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs and Jews in Bosnia and Herzegovina established “the cult of *komšiluk* (neighborhood)”. It was a widespread popular belief that a neighbor’s right is stronger than that of relatives, say these authors.⁴⁹

Fairly enough, a Croatian book has it that “Turkey” during its first period was a “refuge for the religiously persecuted because of its religious tolerance”.⁵⁰ Yet, Croat Catholics suffered the most under the Ottomans. Their numbers were drastically reduced in villages and urban centers. Turks

42 B7b: 37.

43 B7b: 66.

44 B7b: 66-67.

45 B7b: 73.

46 B7a: 60.

47 B7a: 64.

48 B6: 114.

49 B6: 114.

50 C6: 158.

showed enmity toward Catholic clergy, while the Orthodox clergy lived in a “privileged position” and performed their services without problems. Franciscans fared somewhat better than the rest of the Catholic clergy.⁵¹ C7 too states that in the 19th century, Catholics were in the worst position because of the constant enmity between Istanbul and the Vatican. Again, Franciscans were allowed to operate from the time of the conquest of Bosnia.⁵² The *Ahdnama* is not explicitly mentioned.

The Serbian eighth-grade book has nothing positive to say about Ottoman religious policy either. The reestablishment of the Peć Patriarchy (1557-1766) was the result of the role played by the “Islamized Serb” Mehmet Pasha Sokolović, as well as the Serbs’ potential for helping or hindering Turkish conquests.⁵³ While the reconstruction of churches and monasteries is mentioned twice, it is not related in any way to the Ottoman religious policies.⁵⁴ In 1594, the Turks even burned the relics of St. Sava in order to frighten Serbs.⁵⁵ S6 only mentions that the Turks, after conquering Smederevo, destroyed church bells and desecrated churches, turning them into mosques.⁵⁶

To sum up, without questioning the sincerity of the authors of Bosnian-language schoolbooks, one cannot overlook their tendency to paint the picture of Ottoman Bosnia a little rosier than historical evidence allows. For instance, Christians had many problems with the construction and even reconstruction of their religious sites, while the Muslims did not. A sort of tolerance can be ascribed to the Ottomans, but not, by any stretch of imagination, equal treatment of different religious communities. Furthermore, the reestablishment of the Peć Patriarchy is mentioned, but not its abolition. On the other side, both Croat and Serb authors try to project an image of their respective peoples as the greatest victims of Ottoman religious policy, though the Croats are much fairer and closer to the historical evidence. Without glorifying Ottoman practices, they could have acknowledged the

51 C6: 157.

52 C7: 64.

53 S8: 33-34.

54 S8: 35-36. Boris Nilević notes that in the first few decades after the establishment of the Peć Patriarchy over one hundred Orthodox sites were reconstructed or built anew in the territories under its jurisdiction (p. 114, 215). He also gives details of the (re)construction of many Orthodox churches and monasteries during Ottoman times. See his: *Srpska pravoslavna crkva u Bosni i Hercegovini do obnove Pečke patrijaršije 1557. godine* [Serbian Orthodox Church in B&H until the reestablishment of Peć Patriarchy in 1557] (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1990), 143-71.

55 S8: 46.

56 S6: 94.

positive aspects of their religious policies and the role of the *Shari'ah* in it, as many South Slavic historians have already done.⁵⁷

Devşirme

Devşirme is obviously a very sensitive topic. Up to two hundred thousands young Balkan boys were - most often forcibly - taken away from their parents to serve the sultan as court officials or soldiers. That was a practice unheard of in the annals of Muslim history before the Ottomans or after them. Authors of Serb textbooks do not fail to remind their young readers of this cruel practice, even when they do not deal with the period in which it was practiced. Sometimes they use the famous poetic phrase *danak u krvi* or "tax in blood" to describe the practice.⁵⁸ In addition, S8 brings a moving picture of the collection of this tax, with boys crying from above the horses taking them away, Ottoman soldiers whipping their desperate parents, and houses burning in the background. The picture on its own is enough to induce very strong emotions toward Turks, as they are called. Speaking of janissaries, a Croatian book simply states that they were recruited from the imprisoned and captured Christian children.⁵⁹

Perhaps this is the most difficult single issue for Bosniak authors to deal with, and some of them seem to fail to address it frankly and sincerely. Outside the main text, one book says that

Through devşirme mainly Christian children were collected and sent for accommodation to Anatolian families. There they learned Turkish and were converted to Islam. Children received special education in Istanbul and Edirne. The especially gifted occupied the highest political and military posts in the Empire. However, most went to serve as janissaries.⁶⁰

Another book defines it as "recruitment of healthy boys for military service and administrative tasks", but notes that it is often called a "tribute in blood".⁶¹ Yet others write that:

Since the time of Sultan Mehmed II Fatih the inhabitants of Bosnia were given the privilege (emphasis added) to send their sons to rejuvenate the Sultan's court (sultanski dvorski podmladak, acemi oqlan) under the system of recruit-

57 Mirko Mirković, *Pravni položaj i karakter Srpske crkve pod turskom vlašću (1459-1766)* [Legal Status of the Serbian Church and its Character under Turkish Rule (1459-1766)] (Beograd: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika SR Srbije, 1965), 151-54, 167-72; Nilević, *Srpska Pravoslavna crkva*, 99.

58 S7: 157; S8: 27.

59 C6: 72.

60 B7b: 37, emphasis added.

61 B7c: 63.

ment of janissaries (*devşirme*). This practice enabled many to graduate from the highest schools and occupy prominent offices in the state administration and military.⁶² Some of them were brought up inside the Islamic spiritual order (*Ulama*)... Most of them did not cut off relations with the home country, while many returned to Bosnia and worked there.⁶³

While it seems true that some Bosnian Muslims did ask the sultan to include their children in this practice, it is undeniable that forced separation of children from their Christian parents must have been an extremely difficult experience for both parents and children. The future prospects of these children could not serve as consolation for their Christian parents. A little more sensitivity towards the emotions involved in the issue would improve the credentials of Bosnian textbooks and support their claim to be giving impartial all-BH perspective of events.

The Ottoman state before and after the Great Vienna War in 1683

Historically, the situation of the Ottoman subjects changed together with the worsening fortunes of the state on the battlefield and the decreasing ability of the central government to control local elites. Reforms were supposed to prevent external defeats and internal disintegration, but they ultimately failed to rescue the state. The way in which various periods of Ottoman history are presented can also serve as a test of the impartiality of a book. One Croatian textbook takes these processes into account by briefly stating: "In the early period of her history, Turkey was envied by Europe because of her strength and appealing social system".⁶⁴ Another, dealing with the 19th century, already paints the picture of a lawless state where the local elites do with Christians whatever they please.⁶⁵ A Serbian book devotes one paragraph to the issue saying that the *raya* were always oppressed, but it became worse over time.⁶⁶ During later stages, Sultans tried to improve the status of serfs by introducing reforms and laws. However these measures only worsened the situation.⁶⁷

A Bosnian textbook refers to the gradual deterioration of the situation on several occasions.⁶⁸ Moreover, the authors devote one section to the

62 Surprisingly, B. Nilević partially agrees with such a view. *Srpska pravoslavna crkva*, p. 118.

63 B6: 116.

64 C6: 158.

65 C7: 65.

66 S8: 28.

67 S8: 39.

68 B7b: 36, 43, 66.

distinctive features of three periods of Ottoman history: rise, decline and crisis.⁶⁹ In the brief exposition that follows, the first period is described as one of stability and military success, while later the situation went from bad to worse. Comparing Ottoman and European feudal systems during the 16th century, the Ottoman one is described as more friendly towards its subjects. All this changed in the 18th century, when lost wars, hunger, plagues, and *hajduk* rebellions all contributed to the deterioration of the status of Christian subjects. These difficult conditions led not only to polarization between Muslims and Christians in the state, but also between the local Muslim population and the central government in Istanbul.⁷⁰ The introduction of the practice of tax farming (*çiftluk*) was fatal for society and state.⁷¹ Later reforms improved the conditions of Christians, but that was too little, too late.⁷² B7c too considers the introduction of *çiftluk* to be one of the key causes of the decline and disintegration of the Ottoman state.⁷³ As in other regions, this practice caused the resistance of the BH population to Istanbul.⁷⁴ B6 links the deterioration of subjects' position to the crises of 17th and 18th centuries. New, difficult conditions caused resistance and rebellions among both Muslims and Christians.⁷⁵ B7a positively assesses the attempts at reform after Omer Pasha Latas in Bosnia in the 1860s.⁷⁶

Thus, Serbian textbooks have missed another opportunity to say at least a few nice words about the early Ottomans, while Croatian ones seized that opportunity. Bosniak authors felt that the obvious change which was taking place in the late 17th Ottoman state was a good opportunity to start dissociating Bosniaks from the Ottomans, preparing the terrain for their independent Bosniak history that would culminate in the uprising of Husein-kapetan Gradašević.

The Sultan and the local elites

Ottoman history occupies a special place in the memories of the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina because of the local Muslim population, who are perceived by Serbs and Croats to be descendants and successors of the Ottomans. Yet, they are not fully identified with the Ottomans, whose

69 B7b: 58.

70 B7b: 83.

71 B7b: 84-86, 142-44.

72 B7b: 153.

73 B7b: 56-57.

74 B7b: 130.

75 B6: 114.

76 B7a: 84.

interests often clashed with those of the local population. In this section we are looking at the relative image of the central Ottoman authorities, personified in the sultan, and the local, mainly Muslim, elites. Because of the repercussions for inter-ethnic relations in Bosnia today, it is very significant to see who is portrayed as the good or bad guy.

According to one Bosnian textbook, Bosnia enjoyed a special, privileged status within the Ottoman state.⁷⁷ Local *sipahis* were responsible landlords, while the *timar* system was misused mainly by foreigners and from the center.⁷⁸ A few pages later, however, it is admitted that local authorities often abused their authority while collecting taxes.⁷⁹ There is no word on the ethnic origin of these local authorities, who could be foreigners, but most probably were overwhelmingly of local background. Reforms created a gulf of distrust between the central government and Bosniaks, who believed that the sultan did not care about Bosnia anymore.⁸⁰ Others, too, note that by the early 18th century, Bosniaks had already lost trust in the Porte.⁸¹ However, united in their interest to defend and preserve Bosnia within the Ottoman state, Bosniaks had an ambivalent attitude toward the sultan.⁸² They were unhappy about the rising number of Bosniak youths laying down their lives for the sultan all over the Empire, but they could not do without the sultan in defending their own homeland, Bosnia. (More on this in the section on rebellions).

Somewhat similarly, the authors of B7a devote a section to the attitude of Bosniaks toward the central government in the late 18th and early 19th century. According to them, representatives of the Ottoman government did not enjoy any respect in the eyes of the local population. Bosniaks felt increasingly alone.⁸³ During the reforms, this feeling developed into open rebellion against the perceived attempt by the central authorities to destroy “*authentic Bosnian institutions* that were formed within the *sipahi-timar* system: the janissaries’ order, *kapetanijas*, *sipahiluks*, *ayans*, *asnafs*, etc.”.⁸⁴ There were additional reasons for this attitude toward the center on the part of the Bosniaks. The Bosniaks severely criticized the Porte for its soft line towards Serbs and excesses in collecting taxes.⁸⁵ From the 18th

77 B7b: 64.

78 B7b: 77-78.

79 B7b: 83.

80 B7b: 132-3, 137, 151.

81 B7c: 131.

82 B7c: 134-5.

83 B7a: 35-37.

84 B7a: 38, emphasis added.

85 B7a: 59.

century onward, Bosniaks increasingly perceived the Ottomans as foreigners who came to enrich themselves and who enabled Christians to take over first the economic and then the political power.⁸⁶ Finally, in 1878, there was a strong feeling that the sultan had sold Bosnia to the Austrians.⁸⁷ B6 speaks extensively about the resistance of Bosniaks to Porte policies and their prominent role in defending Bosnia.⁸⁸

Croatian textbooks depict the sultan as protector of the *raya*,⁸⁹ or contrast the role of the sultan as protector of the *raya* with the preying attitude of local “Turks”, whom the sultan could not control.⁹⁰ Similarly, in a Serbian textbook the sultan’s reforms are positively assessed. However, they failed miserably because of the resistance by local landlords and by the majority of the Muslim population.⁹¹

The emerging pattern is very consistent with the three national historiographies. Bosnian textbooks try to dissociate Bosniaks from the Ottomans and adopt a more nationalist attitude toward the Ottomans from the 18th century, trying to avoid the association of Bosniaks with the oppression of later Ottoman times and the bad memories of Serbs and Croats. On the other hand, Croat and Serb authors represent local Muslims, the grandfathers of today’s Bosniaks, as actually worse than the Ottomans from Istanbul themselves, which is consistent with the infamous saying: *poturica gori od Turčina* (a convert to Islam is worse than a Turk).

The relative positions and roles of Muslims and Christians

Croatian textbooks repeatedly stress that Catholics were the biggest losers under the Ottomans. Fairly enough, it is noted that Muslims, too, were *raya*.⁹² There is nothing about Christians as Ottoman partners in war and peace. A Serbian book briefly mentions Christian landlords (*sipahis*) and Serb vassals of the Ottomans.⁹³ Another observes that Serbs were important for Ottoman conquests, whether as their allies or enemies. However, it was local Muslims who supported the Ottomans in their wars against their Christian neighbors.⁹⁴ Serbs made up the majority of the productive class

86 B7a: 66.

87 B7a: 93.

88 B6: 122-123.

89 C6: 156.

90 C7: 64-65.

91 S8: 83, 148.

92 C6: 155-157; C7: 64.

93 S7: 156, 173.

94 S8: 37 and 28.

of *raya*; there were Muslims in the *raya* class, but they were privileged as members of the ruling religion. The Catholic minority in western Herzegovina and central Bosnia lived under the same conditions as Orthodox Christians. Constant wars, migrations of Serbs and fights with their “fellow nationals of Islamic religion” spoiled the religious and social relations in Bosnia until the end of Ottoman rule. Some Christians were incorporated into the ruling class and eventually converted to Islam.⁹⁵ When sultans tried to reform the state, local conservative Muslims opposed the reforms and eventually rebelled against the sultan.⁹⁶

Bosnian textbooks downplay the privileges of Muslims; they bring to the fore similarities between their condition and that of the others, and instances of cooperation between Muslims and Christians against oppression by representatives of the Ottoman government. B6 points out that the majority of Muslims belonged not to the ruling class but to the producers, the *raya*. Their status was quite similar to that of the Christian *raya*.⁹⁷ The Muslim *raya* did not have to pay *kharaj*, but had to answer the sultan’s call to go to war.⁹⁸ Consequently, from the 17th century on both Muslims and Christians resisted Ottoman policies.⁹⁹ B7b notes that already by the 16th century the majority of the *raya* classes in Bosnia were Muslims. They were in “exactly the same position” as Christian *raya*. Both were subjugated. The taxes they paid were also quite similar. Christians paid *kharaj*, but Muslims had to go to the army.¹⁰⁰ The despised owners of *čifluks* (*čifluk sahibije*) were both rich Muslims and non-Muslims.¹⁰¹ The leader of the major Bosniak revolt from the 1820s, Husein-kapetan Gradašćević, maintained very good relations with Christians, had their support and enjoyed popularity in both communities. He allowed a church, a monastery and a school to be built without consulting the sultan.¹⁰² B7c too stresses that both Muslims and non-Muslims were *raya*. Muslims and Christians were unequal only in administration and defense. Otherwise, they enjoyed the equal protection of the state.¹⁰³ Significant political participation of Christians in BH government bodies after the reforms is highlighted.¹⁰⁴

95 S8: 29.

96 S8: 119, 148, 164.

97 B6: 113.

98 B6: 109.

99 B6: 114, 115.

100 B7b: 69.

101 B7b: 139.

102 B7b: 133, 135.

103 B7c: 50, 49, and 61-62.

104 B7c: 147.

Overall, Bosnian language schoolbooks try to hammer out as many similarities between the positions of the three peoples under the Ottomans as the basis for a common destiny today, while the Serbian textbooks in particular associate Bosnian Muslims as closely as possible with “Ottoman occupiers”.

Migrations and demographic changes

Centuries of Ottoman rule permanently reshaped the demographic composition of the Balkans. Some people moved voluntarily, but often they were forced to do so. Migrations did not stop with the departure of the Ottomans. Muslims who remained in the territories left by the Ottomans soon had to follow them. Here we look at how this painful chapter of Ottoman history in the Balkans is presented.

Among Bosnian textbooks, B7b deals with this issue only within the BH context, without always being very explicit about the religious or ethnic background of the migrating population. The conquest of Bosnia caused migrations, especially in Herzegovina and lands on the border with Hungary. The deserted regions were populated by people from neighboring lands, mostly Vlachs, which caused major demographic and ethnic changes, especially west of the river Vrbas.¹⁰⁵ An Orthodox population left territories under Catholic rule and settled in Ottoman Bosnia because of lower taxes and greater religious freedoms.¹⁰⁶ Speaking of the 19th century, three types of migration are mentioned. First, there were migrations from Bosnia due to wars. It is not specified what religious or ethnic group was leaving Bosnia. Second, Orthodox people from Montenegro, Eastern Herzegovina and Dalmatia settled in the eastern and western parts of Bosnia, especially in the late 18th and early 19th century. They often filled the vacuum left by plagues in previously Muslim areas. Finally, Muslims expelled from Serbia settled in Bosnia.¹⁰⁷

B7c also cites wars as a major cause of the migrations that affected Herzegovina and areas adjacent to Hungary in particular. The majority of those who settled in Bosnia were Vlachs.¹⁰⁸ In the 18th century, Venetians managed to convince some Christians from Ottoman territories to come over to them and fight the Ottomans from their territory. Depopulated regions

105 B7b: 67.

106 B7b: 86.

107 B7b: 141.

108 B7c: 49.

were filled up by Vlachs, which changed the demographic structure of the Bosnian province. The suffering of the BH population in border areas during this period is said to be described in epic poems of the time.¹⁰⁹ The fate of Muslims in the territories lost by the Ottomans is not dealt with separately, but there is a hint that they did not fare well under either Austrians or Venetians.¹¹⁰

According to B6, in the 16th century Ottoman conquests caused northward migrations toward southern Hungary and today's Vojvodina in Serbia. With the aim of reviving economic life in the conquered territories, the Ottomans themselves moved populations to thinly populated or deserted areas. In the process they brought Vlach cattle breeders to Bosnia. From Bosnia they settled farmers in Slavonia (Croatia), while in the Dalmatian hinterland there were colonists from Metohija and Bosnia. The result of all these migrations was the ethnic dominance of South Slavs in the central and southwestern Balkans. "Common customs, ways of life, cloth etc. spread throughout the region".¹¹¹ In the 18th century, the fate that met Muslims in the territories that the Ottomans lost after the Great Vienna War (1683-99) was the main motive for Bosniaks to fight for their homeland, without expecting too much help from Istanbul.¹¹² What happened to them after the Ottomans departed Slavonia, Dalmatia, Lika and Kordun amounted to genocide. Actually, that was the first in a series of genocides that happened to Bosniaks in modern history because of their religion.¹¹³ A page is spent on describing the fate of Bosniaks in these territories, where all traces of Islam were erased. The expulsion of Bosniaks continued in the form of the "*istraga poturica*" (extermination of converts to Turkish religion) in Montenegro during the 18th century. The same authors emphasize the fate of Muslims in Serbia after the uprisings in the early 19th century and in the 1860s.¹¹⁴

A Croatian book emphasizes Croat migrations from Bosnia to Slavonia and Srijem.¹¹⁵ After the campaign of Eugene of Savoy (1697), some 30,000 Serbs too had to leave Serbia and move to Hungary, fearing Ottoman reprisals.¹¹⁶ An Orthodox population was resettled in areas previously populated by Catholics. Those were mainly Vlachs but also Serbs who

109 B7c: 66.

110 B7c: 130.

111 B6: 110.

112 B6: 122.

113 B6: 124.

114 B7a: 29-30, 84.

115 C6: 92.

116 C6: 137.

followed the withdrawing Ottomans to Bosnia after they had lost Slavonia in Croatia.¹¹⁷

While Croat and Bosnian textbooks give at least fragmentary information about the fate of the other two BH nations, Serb textbooks completely neglect their migrations. There is nothing about the conversion of Catholic churches and monasteries in Dalmatia into Orthodox ones.¹¹⁸ One book devotes three pages to the 15th and 16th century Serb migrations to Hungary, where they served as a “human shield” against the Turks.¹¹⁹ Another has two pieces on Serb migrations to Hungary in the 14th and 15th centuries. According to these texts, in the autumn of 1480 alone, 60,000 Serbs crossed the Sava. The text describes how the heads of 300 Turks, killed in one of the border battles, were brought before Serb military leaders.¹²⁰ S8 tells the story of Ottoman resettlement of Serbs along their borders with Hungary, and how by the late 16th century these lands were called “Serbia”. It also elaborates on the settlement of other Serbs along the other side of the border.¹²¹ A whole chapter is dedicated to Serb migrations to southern Hungary after 1683, when tens of thousands of Serb families are said to have moved. The only reference to Muslim migrations is in S9, where it is said that after the establishment of the Novi Pazar *sancak* in 1852, many Albanians, Turks and Muslims settled there after leaving the liberated Serb lands.¹²²

Generally, there is little empathy for the suffering of others in the BH textbooks. The authors of B7b, B7c, and C6 show some impartiality. Most problematic are the Serbian textbooks, which show no empathy for the pain of the Croats or Bosniaks, and simply gloss over the migrations under the Ottomans that enabled Serbs to populate areas where they had not lived before, like most of Bosnia. Similarly problematic is the way B6 uses the term genocide exclusively for forced Muslim migrations from the 17th century onwards.

Rebellions and Uprisings

Who forced the Ottomans to leave the Balkans? According to a Croatian book “Turks”, i.e., local Muslims, did rebel, not against the Ottomans,

117 C6: 156.

118 Nilević, *Srpska pravoslavna crkva*, 115.

119 S7: 184-186.

120 S6: 104.

121 S6: 47-55.

122 S9: 39.

but against reforms that threatened their privileges.¹²³ Bosnian textbooks speak of a multitude of uprisings and rebellions in which both Muslims and Christians rose up against the Ottomans. Uprisings were caused by Ottoman cruelty, excessive taxes, reforms that were perceived by Bosniaks as anti-Islamic, and Bosniak demands for autonomy.¹²⁴ According to B7b, the uprisings in 1875 were caused by hardship and severe policies, “provoked” by misrule, and joined by foreigners as well.¹²⁵ B7c describes in detail how Bosniaks rebelled against the Ottomans in the 19th century.¹²⁶ The last uprising of the Orthodox and Catholic population that dealt the final blow to Ottoman rule in Bosnia was caused by their economic status.¹²⁷ Attempts to involve Muslims in this uprising failed. Overall, the uprising was extremely bloody. Over three years of conflict, in Bosnia alone, some 150,000 people died.

A Serbian textbook glorifies the first rebels against the Ottomans, the *hayduks*, and states that if they were caught their punishment was impalement.¹²⁸ Orthodox Christians led by their Church rebelled almost regularly, although unsuccessfully, from the 16th century onwards.¹²⁹ Unlike the uprising of Husein-kapetan Gradašćević, which only gets half a page¹³⁰, special attention is paid to the Serb uprisings in Serbia in 1804 and 1815.¹³¹ The development of both uprisings is followed in detail, including the reprisals and repression by the “Turks”.¹³² Serb uprisings in Bosnia intensified by the early 19th century because of increased taxes and the worsening situation of the serfs.¹³³ They culminated in the uprising of 1875, which was caused by the unresolved “agrarian issue” over land ownership. The uprising is described in detail, including the fact that Muslims were repeatedly invited to join it.¹³⁴ The focus is all the time on Bosnian Serbs.

Bosnian textbooks thus continue their effort to distance Bosniaks from the later Ottomans and show the role of Bosniaks in the struggle for an

123 C7: 65.

124 B7a: 32, 59-60.

125 B7b: 119, 149.

126 B7b: 138-143.

127 B7b: 146-50.

128 S8: 29-30, 118.

129 S8: 46-47.

130 S8: 119-20

131 S8: 82-109.

132 S8: 91, 96, 101, 155. However, Vuk Karadžić is cited as saying that the rule of Miloš Obilić was even worse (S6: 99, 102).

133 S8: 120.

134 S8: 164-70.

independent Bosnia, while Serbian textbooks try to demonstrate that it was the Serbs who actually liberated everybody in Bosnia and the region, against the wishes of local Muslims.

Ottoman influence on local culture

Bosnian textbooks generally point out that the economy of the Ottoman society was based on agriculture. Other important sectors were mining, which stagnated under the Ottomans, commerce and craftsmanship, which prospered in the same period. The first industrial developments took place in the mid-19th century. There is not much analysis of the reasons for the underdevelopment of industry and road infrastructure by the early 19th century. Oriental-Islamic culture is said to have enriched local culture, and the mixing of peoples and cultures that happened during Ottoman times is “the ethnic basis” of contemporary BH society. B6 spends quite some time on the cultural achievements within all four major religious communities.¹³⁵

Comparing the Ottoman economy with its European counterparts, a Croatian book observes that the Ottomans relied primarily on a rural economy that was at the level of an early medieval economy, while European states were developing market economies, establishing themselves as absolutist monarchies and modernizing their armies.¹³⁶ The influence of Islamic culture is given positive coverage. Many Muslims and Franciscans are said to have been active in literature and science during the period. Islamic culture influenced even Christian customs. An example of religious architecture is the magnificent building of the (Ghazi) Husraw-bay mosque in Sarajevo, allegedly by the architect Sinan. The infrastructure was built to support trade, while religious foundations took care of the social needs of the people. During its first period, because of religious tolerance, which was an Ottoman strength, and the appeal of its social system, the Ottoman state was the envy of the Europeans, who borrowed many things from them. Nothing is said about Serbian or Jewish culture in Bosnia under the Ottomans.¹³⁷

According to a Serbian book, the “(m)ore primitive Turkish feudal system significantly slowed down the economic and social development of the subjugated peoples”.¹³⁸ Production fell, particularly in mining. Trade was

135 B7b: 72-74, 144-45; B7c: 57-60, 153, 156; B6: 125-9; B7a, 87-8.

136 C6: 135.

137 C6: 157-58.

138 S7: 186.

dying; instead of a monetary economy, the barter one was reviving.¹³⁹ S8 positively assesses the development of trade and craftsmanship from the 16th to the 18th century, in which people of all religions partook. However, cultural life developed within religious communities, and Serbs had many difficulties regarding religious freedom.¹⁴⁰ In the 19th century the Ottoman government dealt especially strictly with any manifestation of Serb national consciousness. Allegedly it was forbidden to publicly use the Serb name, the name of Serbian language or Serbian script. Import of books from Serbia was forbidden or strictly controlled. The government tried to promote the idea of a “Bosnian” language.¹⁴¹ S9 concludes that in the 19th century, “(t)he Turkish feudal system and corrupt administration left these regions least developed economically and culturally.... It slowed down development of capitalism and local middle class... The sultan’s reforms only made things worse.”¹⁴²

Unlike Croatian and Bosnian textbooks that manage to be relatively fair in their assessment of Ottoman influence on local cultures, Serbian ones deny the Ottomans any contribution to their culture, despite the huge number of Oriental words in the Serbian vocabulary and the Ottoman influence on Serbian everyday life, customs, music, and so on.

Moral qualities of the Ottomans and the author’s nation

During the six centuries of Ottoman presence on three continents, there were good and bad rulers, soldiers, administrators, and ordinary men and women. One could make just about any claim, good or bad, about the Ottomans, and be able to find an example to illustrate it. What picture of the Ottomans emerges therefore depends very much on the focus of the textbook. For instance, C6 is extraordinarily focused on *akincis*, *jihad*, and booty: *akincis* are mentioned four times as special units that “set ablaze and burned” (*žarili i palili*) everything along the border¹⁴³, “pillaged and looted Croatian and Slavic lands”¹⁴⁴, “raided villages and committed horrors”.¹⁴⁵ For the Turkish army “every war was jihad - holy war against infidels. In addition, motivated by booty the Turkish army was a frightening force”.¹⁴⁶

139 S8: 186.

140 S8: 29.

141 S8: 165, quotes in original.

142 S9: 39.

143 C6: 72.

144 C6: 92.

145 C6: 93.

146 C6: 72.

In the end it is not clear what motivated the Ottomans more: religious or worldly reasons. A 15th-century Archbishop of Split is quoted as crying in Rome: “They tear small kids from the breasts of their mothers, ravish women in front of their husbands, tear girls out of their mothers’ embrace, cut down old parents in front of their sons...” (*‘Dječicu trgaju s majčinih prsa, žene pred očima muževa oskvrnjuju, djevojke grabe iz majčina zagrljaja, stare roditelje na očigled sinova sijeku...*).¹⁴⁷ The resulting image of the Ottomans is one of savage barbarians. The same textbook paints starkly different pictures of Turks who were looting Balkan states¹⁴⁸ and the “brilliant” or “glittering” Crusader armies of European knights.¹⁴⁹ The Ottomans, according to C6, knew no ethics and could not be trusted. Sultan Fatih killed the last Bosnian king despite all his promises.¹⁵⁰ Admittedly, Eugene of Savoy was not much better; he was only able to pillage Bosnia.¹⁵¹ Speaking of Ali Pasha Rizvanbegović, C7 uses epic language: “The ‘*Raya*’ was breathing its last breaths under the oppression of his sons and tax officials who asked for *kharaj* and took taxes even for those who had been dead up to six years. Turks swore that they would uproot Christians from Mostar. In 1840 they expelled all Catholics from the city and surrounding villages. In such a way about 320 families were banished”.¹⁵² The reader may suspect that the authors of this paragraph - by dramatizing and giving much significance to one episode among hundreds of population movements in all directions in the Balkans - are trying to justify ethnic cleansing by Croatian forces around Mostar in the 1990s. As Christina Koulouri observed: “Contemporary conflicts are projected onto the past to appear as constant and unchanging throughout history.”¹⁵³ In Bosnian textbooks, the image of the Ottomans deteriorates in the second half of their rule when, it is said, they became corrupt and cruel.¹⁵⁴

Serbian textbooks paint the Ottomans as bloody conquerors and ruthless rulers throughout. Looting, burning, enslavement and fear was the way they conquered the Balkans.¹⁵⁵ “Corruption, violence, looting and parasitism were

147 C6: 93.

148 C6: 73.

149 C6: 73, 87.

150 C6: 90, 154.

151 C6: 136.

152 C7: 66.

153 Christina Koulouri, ed., *Clio in the Balkans: The Politics of History Education* (Thessaloniki: The Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, 2002), 11.

154 B7b: 130, 133, 136; B7a: 89.

155 S7: 168, 184.

the main characteristics of their administration".¹⁵⁶ They practiced violence and oppression of all sorts.¹⁵⁷ S6, in a piece from the Turkish chronicle of an ex-janissary, describes the Ottoman conquest of Novo Brdo and the treatment of the conquered population. The Ottomans are said to have separated out the young men from the rest. The most prominent men were killed, while the rest were allowed to go to their homes, which were not touched. The sultan distributed some 320 young men and 700 women among his subjects, while he took an unspecified number of youths for his janissary units.¹⁵⁸ Again, because of the resemblance between this story and what happened in 1992-1995 in Bosnia, the possibility that this text was selected to justify modern ethnic cleansing cannot escape the reader's mind.

Illustrations

Illustrations generally follow the text. Illustrations of military and political history dominate: cavalry, troops, rulers, rebel leaders, battles, and maps showing borders that changed after wars.

In C6, perhaps the most interesting illustration is a sequence of small pictures depicting 'feudal taxes'¹⁵⁹: hard-working peasants in the field, a *sipahi* on a horse, a soldier on horse driving six boys to the sultan, a humble subject submitting his taxes to an Ottoman official sitting on a sofa with his legs and hands crossed. At the top, the sultan stands with his hands on his stomach and the Aya Sofia Mosque is in the background. C7 does not spend much time on the Ottoman period anyway, and the illustrations are few: three men in 19th-century folk costume, Omer Pasha Latas, and a Franciscan church.

B6 has been variously illustrated since its first wartime edition, but there have been no particularly interesting changes. In the edition under review, apart from rulers and maps, there are street pictures showing what Muslims and non-Muslims wore at the turn of 20th century; three illustrations from the Sarajevo *Haggada*; and architecture: the Old Bridge in Mostar, the Sephardic synagogue, Počitelj, the period interior of a Muslim house, a housing complex from Stolac, the Žitomislići monastery, and Ferhat Pasha's mosque in Banja Luka. Some of these are famous landmarks that

156 S8: 28. Similar assertions are repeated on pages 98 and 148.

157 S8: 30, 83, 84, 86. Boris Nilević advises historians to take contemporary accounts of Ottoman oppression both as true and as "reactions against episodic lawlessness and the autocracy of Turks", *Srpska pravoslavna crkva*, 101.

158 S6: 92.

159 C6: 154.

were destroyed in the 1992-1995 war, but captions give only the year of construction. While thematically balanced, these illustrations seem to be too few given the wealth of information they accompany, and the Croat component of BH culture and history seems to be underrepresented.

Apart from mainly Muslim rulers, rebels, and maps, B7a has period pictures of 19th-century Mostar and life in Sarajevo's market streets (Baščaršija). Generally, both text and illustrations are of low print quality. There could have been many more pictures to illustrate the extensive text covering the Ottoman period. However, I could not identify any problematic illustration. The 1994 edition featured two pictures from the last Ottoman days, Bosnians battling the Austrian army near Ali pasha's mosque, and the Austrian army crossing the Sava River; these are missing in the later edition. Probably these pictures seemed inappropriate in 2001 when B&H was effectively ruled by the Austrian diplomat Wolfgang Petritsch and was seeking closer ties with the EU.

B7b is beautifully designed and well illustrated. Apart from the Ottoman rulers, maps, and battle scenes, there are street scenes, glimpses of peasant life, mosques, churches, monasteries, and a Jewish graveyard; there are illustrations of towns and bridges and books such as Mehmet Pasha Sokolović's *Mushaf* (a copy of the Qur'an), Gospels from the Old Orthodox Church in Sarajevo and a page from an Oriental astrological work.

B7c, again, mainly shows maps, rulers (including non-Muslims such as Eugene of Savoy, Miloš Obrenović, and Petar Petrović Njegoš), and armies, along with some bridges and fortresses, places of worship, and religious icons of the different faiths.

The illustrations of S7 are predominantly military, political, and Serbian: portraits, seals and coins of Serbian kings, Miloš Obilić killing sultan Murad, the fall of Constantinople and the Turkish siege of Belgrade, weapons and maps. There are some churches and a monastery. There is no illustration referring to non-Serbian culture or life-style, unless you count two illustrations of Ottoman cavalrymen. S8 includes a moving illustration of the Ottomans taking young boys from their desperate parents with burning houses in the background.¹⁶⁰ Otherwise, it focuses on Serbian rulers, rebels, and church leaders, maps, and documents, along with some Orthodox monasteries and practices. As in S7, non-Serbs are hardly given any attention. S9 speaks only of Balkan wars, and only pictures of Serb

160 S8: 27.

military leaders and battles are shown. Finally, S6 is illustrated by pictures of Kraljević Marko and Miloš Obilić together, Miloš Obilić alone, Novo Brdo, Smederevo, Sultan Mehmed II, the seal of King Stefan Tvrtko I with the coat of arms of Bosnian *bans* and Serbian kings, Bobovac, an old map of Srem, Bačka and Banat, and the battle at Mohacs in 1526.

The map and picture language of these textbooks show more or less the same tendencies as the text itself. National, political and military themes dominate, while “others” are under-represented or ignored, especially in Serbian schoolbooks. Sarajevo Publishing does by far the best job with its seventh-grade history books.¹⁶¹

Factual inaccuracies and language

One would expect the textbooks to be well researched and free of outright factual mistakes. However, that is not the case. A Bosnian book wrongly asserts that when a Muslim sued a Christian, a church court had jurisdiction over the case.¹⁶² Another inaccurately writes that Sultan Sulayman died while besieging Vienna¹⁶³ and that the Mufti was the chief religious justice or judge.¹⁶⁴ According to a Croatian book, Sultan Fatih conquered between 70 and 300 cities in Bosnia and took away about 100,000 ordinary people and 30,000 young men for janissaries¹⁶⁵, all of which is extremely unlikely. The whole of Bosnia today does not have 300 cities, and to take so many people would mean to leave the land without people and therefore to reduce the tax base, which contradicts Ottoman practice. The same textbook also says that the (Ghazi Husraw) Bey’s mosque in Sarajevo was built by Sinan, which is not the case.¹⁶⁶ Another claims that until the 19th century, the army was composed of the young men of subdued peoples.¹⁶⁷ In fact, during the great days of the Ottoman state, janissaries were not its most numerous military units. Furthermore, the practice of taking *devşirme* for the Ottoman army stopped soon after Sultan Sulayman (most probably in 1638), because janissaries managed to get permission to marry while in uniform, and then did everything to have their sons recruited instead of *acemi oğlan*. A Serbian

161 B7b and B7c.

162 B7b: 66.

163 B7c: 41.

164 B7c: 48.

165 C6: 154.

166 C6: 157.

167 C7: 65.

book mentions Venice and the Venetian Republic as members of an anti-Ottoman alliance, as if they were two different states.¹⁶⁸

The language used in BH textbooks generally fits the overall attitude of its authors toward the Ottomans and their legacy. Serbian textbooks often juxtapose “Turks” with “Christian lands”.¹⁶⁹ Battles with Turks, the Turkish army, and fear of Turks are described in an epic manner.¹⁷⁰ Students are encouraged to memorize epic poems.¹⁷¹ The relationship between Turks and their subjects are often described as “enslavement”, “repression”, and “social exploitation”.¹⁷² Turks “oppress”, “burn to the ground”, “take into slavery”, etc.¹⁷³ One book describes the Ottoman period simply as “the worst of all times”.¹⁷⁴ In a few instances, Bosnian authors use the same language: Serbia and Montenegro were “enslaved” (*porobljene*) by the Ottomans¹⁷⁵; Greek rebels “liberated” most of Morea¹⁷⁶; on a map of the 1875 uprising in Bosnia, the south-west region is labeled as the “liberated area”.¹⁷⁷ In accordance with the systematic denial of statehood of B&H before the Dayton peace accords, both a Croatian and a Serbian book treat Bosnia and Herzegovina during Ottoman times not as a single country but as two regions.¹⁷⁸

4. Conclusion

It is said that wars of historiography often precede and continue after wars in real history. To a certain extent, this is true of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is certainly most unfortunate that eleven years after the war, BH history schoolbooks contain materials that incite mistrust of others, to say the least. Not all these books are alike. There is a clear difference between those BH history textbooks that try to cultivate attitudes conducive to living together, and those that have been written as if only one group of people lives in Bosnia.

Authors of the schoolbooks in the Bosnian language, being in a particularly delicate position, try to highlight the best from the past as the

168 S8: 49.

169 S7: 157-59.

170 S7: 159, 165.

171 S8: 32.

172 S8: 27-28.

173 S9: 39-49.

174 S6: 86.

175 B7c: 41.

176 B7a: 32.

177 B7a: 90.

178 C7: 64; S8: 117, 121.

basis for contemporary coexistence, while Serbian textbooks, and sometimes Croatian ones, bring the worst of it to the students' attention. Especially in the case of Serbian textbooks, the history of the other two peoples is completely omitted, as are less admirable episodes in Serbia's own past,¹⁷⁹ while such episodes are stressed in the past of others. Simultaneously, the achievements of one nation are highlighted while those of other nations are neglected.¹⁸⁰ Information that could disturb the nationalistic narrative is withheld. The myths that other authors have recognized in Serbian historiography and public opinion, namely *ante murale*, *sui generis* and antiquity,¹⁸¹ are heavily present in Serbian history textbooks for elementary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The *ante murale* myth of being Europe's "front wall" against Islam is explicitly present in Croatian textbooks too. Especially disturbing in Serbian textbooks are the multiple references to alleged impalements of Serbs by the Ottomans. It is very probable that such insistence on repeating the image of impalement disposed some Serbs to see physical revenge against contemporary Muslims during the recent war as acceptable.¹⁸² The focus on such historically doubtful but very divisive episodes cultivates animosity between children of different nationalities. Too graphic accounts of crimes and interethnic violence serve no pedagogical objective. They undermine the confidence and trust that good textbook should help foster.

Textbooks in the Bosnian language, for their part, try to idealize certain aspects of Ottoman history. They seem to be too reluctant to take an impartial if not critical stance toward certain less bright pages of Ottoman history, as in the case of *devşirme*. The same could be said of the claims about the equal rights of all Ottoman subjects. To various degrees, all textbooks have selective memories, remembering one's own suffering and forgetting the suffering of others. They also have problems taking a critical approach to roles played by one's own nation. Because of this, Heike Karge has even proposed that the concept of the history textbook itself should be revised: "Until now this concept has dealt with the presentation of historical facts

179 For instance, Serb textbooks nowhere mention the role that the Serbian Church played with regard to Catholics in Bosnia. See Nilević, *Srpska pravoslavna crkva*, 198-208.

180 In this regard, Serbian textbooks fit the prevalent SE pattern. See: Costa Carras, "Preface", in Christina Koulouri, ed., *Clio in the Balkans: The Politics of History Education* (Thessaloniki: The Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, 2002), 3.

181 Ana Antić, "Evolucija i uloga tri kompleksa istorijskih mitova u srpskom akademskom i javnom mnjenju u posljednjih deset godina", *Historijski mitovi na Balkanu*, 258-289.

182 For one interesting, if problematic, argument along these lines, see Lynda E. Boose, "Crossing the River Drina: Bosnia Rape Camps, Turkish Impalement, and Serb Cultural memory", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 28 (2002), no. 1., 90.

and not with the aim of developing a critical consciousness of history among pupils.”¹⁸³

Certainly, if we look only at the treatment of the Ottoman period, the Serbian textbooks surveyed would get the lowest score on any evaluation scale for a good history textbook in the 21st century. They systematically and persistently project negative stereotypes of the Ottomans. The result is a much simpler picture of the Ottoman period than the evidence warrants: the Ottomans were oppressors, while Serbs (and sometimes Croats) were freedom fighters from day one to the First Balkan Wars. In fact, the social history of B&H under the Ottomans was particularly complex, with the Serbian Church and privileged strata of the non-Muslim population often siding with the Ottomans in order to preserve their privileges, in the same way that local Muslims resisted reforms.

How nationalism has distorted historiography in Bosnia can best be seen by comparing contemporary history textbooks with the Chronicle of the Franciscan Nikola Lašvanin from Central Bosnia from the first half of the 18th century, or other contemporary Christian sources. Unlike modern Serbian and some Croatian schoolbooks, in which the Ottoman governors can be depicted as “very wise ... and good by nature”, others are such good rulers that “during their rule the poor did not know what evil was”, and still others were “good men and just”; local Muslim clerics spoke to Ottoman administrators in favor of the local Franciscans, while some Bosnian *ulama* were friends with the Franciscans and the sultan punished governors for slaughtering prisoners of war, etc.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, the respected historian Boris Nilević notes that “sources from this period (15th century, A.A.) do not present such a black picture”.¹⁸⁵

Finally, if it is true that school books are not only means of propaganda but also “a mirror of the society that produces them”, if it is true that “they rarely contain stereotypes and values unacceptable to society” and if it is true that “history books, in particular, may reflect the image a human society has of its past and, indirectly, the way it imagines its future”,¹⁸⁶ then most BH textbooks need urgent rewriting to include others in a meaningful way.

183 Karge, “History after the war”. See: fn. 3.

184 Nikola Lašvanin, *Ljetopis*, Sarajevo/Zagreb: Synopsis, 2003, 207, 231, 232, 220, 224, 203.

185 Nilević, *Srpska pravoslavna crkva*, 1990: 103, also 121, 216

186 Koulouri, “Introduction”, 17.

Özet

Bu makale Bosna-Hersek ilköğretim okullarında okutulan tarih ders kitaplarında tasvir edilen Osmanlı imajını incelemektedir. Çalışmada Boşnakça, Hırvatça ve Sırpça yazılan ders kitapları ele alınmış ve bunlarda Osmanlı tarihinin Kosova muharebesi, Balkanların İslamlaşması gibi ana konularının nasıl işlendiği mukayese edilmiştir. Araştırmamız sonucunda Bosna-Hersek'te yazılan tarih ders kitapları arasında farklılıkların olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Sırp ve bazan Hırvat dilinde yazılan ders kitaplarında Osmanlı tarihi öğrencilere en kötü imajla yansıtılmaktadır. Sırpça kitaplardaki en rahatsız edici konu da Sırpların Osmanlılar tarafından kazığa oturtulup öldürüldüğü iddiasının sık sık tekrar edilmesidir. Bugünkü ders kitaplarını Bosna ile ilgili 15-18. yüzyıl Fransisken ve Ortodoks kronikleriyle karşılaştırdığımızda, milliyetçiliğin bu ülkedeki tarih yazımını nasıl tahrif ettiğini ve mevcut ders kitaplarının acilen değiştirilmesi gerektiğini daha iyi anlamış oluruz.